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ABSTRACT

Since before the nation's birth, people have been told that only an educated person can let public debate arise. At stake is democracy's gamble that enough people have and can show that they have sufficient grasp of public issues to liberate those leaders who would speak the truth and deter others from feeding the people minimum information. What, then, must people know? A study examined how 48 states (plus the District of Columbia (DC) and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) schools) chose to answer this question through their standards for social studies content in the secondary grades. The study examined all published standards documents from 48 states (Iowa and Rhode Island do not have state standards), DC, and the DoD schools. It deals only with what states say should be taught and learned. It does not evaluate teaching practices, or teacher preparation, school resources, or assessments of student achievement. Findings suggest wide variations among the states. This document is divided into three parts: (1) "Introduction: Why This Study and Why a Civic Core?"; (2) "Part One: How to Educate Democracy"; and (3) "Part Two: Reviews of Individual State Standards." Four appendices are included: (1) One Model of a Civic Core: Key Topics and Starting Points; (2) The Civic Core and the Use of Instructional Time; (3) State Responses; and (4) Education for Democracy: A Statement of Principles (1987). (BT)

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